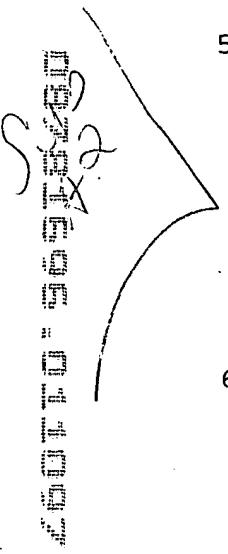CLAIMS

1. In a computer system having (i) a working memory in which application programs are executed, and (ii) an operating system including a file manager for managing files of application programs executed in the working memory, file and file image preview apparatus comprising:

   an extension coupled to the operating system in a manner such that the extension is entirely integrated with the operating system, the extension enabling user selection of a desired file and in response to user selection of the desired file, the extension enabling display of an indication of file characteristics of the desired file in a manner free of opening an application program in working memory and hence external to application programs in the working memory; and

   a display assembly responsive to the extension for displaying the indication of file characteristics of the user-selected desired file, in a manner free of opening an application program in working memory, such that a preview of the user-selected desired file is provided.

2. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the extension is coupled to the file manager of the operating system, such that the extension utilizes a user interface in common with the file manager to effectively provide full integration of the extension with the operating system.

3. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the extension in response to user selection of a desired file further enables display of a working image from the file.

4. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 3 wherein the display of the working image is a reduced-in-size version of the working image.

5. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the indication of file characteristics include indications of at least one of height, width, length, color type, resolution, compression type used for storing and forming the file, and annotation graphics of the file.

6. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 1 wherein the file manager is a document manager for managing directories of files, and

    the extension enables display of an indication of directory characteristics of a user-desired directory.

7. In a computer system having (i) an operating system and (ii) a working memory for executing application programs, file and file image previewing apparatus comprising:

    a file manager coupled to the operating system, the file manager (a) managing files generated by application programs executed in the working memory and (b) enabling display of indicia of file characteristics of a user-selected file, said file manager being coupled to the operating system in a manner such that said display of

indicia of file characteristics is generated
outside of an application program opened and
running in the working memory and hence external
to application programs in the working memory; and
a display assembly responsive to the file
manager for displaying indicia of file
characteristics of the user-selected file, outside
of an application program opened and running in
working memory, said display assembly thus
providing a preview of the user-selected file.

8. A system as claimed in Claim 7 wherein the file
manager in response to user selection of a desired
file further enables display of a working image
from the file.

9. A system as claimed in Claim 8 wherein the display
of the working image is a reduced-in-size version
of the working image.

10. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 7 wherein the
indicia of file characteristics include
indications of at least one of height, width,
length, color type, resolution, compression type
used for storing and forming the file, and
annotation graphics of the file.

11. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 7 wherein the file
manager includes a document manager for managing
folders of files generated by application programs
executed in the working memory, and enables
display of indicia of folder characteristics of
respective user-selected folders in a manner free

of opening and running an application program in
working memory, to provide respective preview of
the user-selected folder.

12. In a computer system, a method of displaying file
characteristics including images of a user-
selected file, to provide a preview of the file,
comprising the steps of:

providing a working memory for executing
application programs;

executing application programs in said
working memory in response to user command, said
execution of the application program generating
files of the computer system;

providing operating system means for enabling
display of indications of file characteristics of
a file selected by a user, the operating system
means enabling display of file characteristics
outside of an application program opened and
running in the working memory; and

in a manner free of opening and running an
application program in the working memory,
displaying the indications of file characteristics
of a user-selected file, in response to user
command for previewing that file.

13. A method as claimed in Claim 12 further comprising
the steps of:

through the operating system means, enabling
display of a working image from the user selected
file; and

displaying a working image with the
indications of file characteristics of said file.

14. A method as claimed in Claim 13 wherein the steps
    of enabling display of a working image and
    displaying the working image include reducing size
    of the working image to provide a minified
    rendition of the working image for previewing
    purposes.

15. A method as claimed in Claim 12 wherein the step
    of providing indications of file characteristics
    includes displaying indications of at least one of
    height, width, length, color type, resolution,
    compression type used for storing and forming the
    file, and annotation graphics of the file.

16. A method as claimed in Claim 12 wherein said step
    of displaying indications of file characteristics
    includes providing a display assembly responsive
    to the operating system means for displaying
    indications of file characteristics outside of an
    application program opened and running in working
    memory.

17. A method as claimed in Claim 12 wherein the step
    of providing operating system means includes at
    least one of:
         providing a document manager in an operating
    system, the document manager for managing
    groupings of files, the document manager enabling
    display of indications of respective
    characteristics of user-selected groupings of the
    files, in a manner free of opening an application
    program in the working memory; and

providing a file manager in an operating
system, the file manager for managing files
generated from application programs executed in
the working memory, the file manager enabling
display of indications of file characteristics of
user-selected files, in a manner free of opening
an application program in the working memory.